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and Justice

Third Civil Society Forum on Drugs in the
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FINAL REPORT

The content of this document does not necessarily reflect the opinions and views of the
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The meeting format was slightly different from the last forum in that it was chaired by Ton Coenen, the Executive Director of the HIV Aids Foundation, and not by the European Commission. The core issues debated were the EU Action Plan on Drugs (2009-2012), the review of UNGASS, the European Commission’s ‘European Action on Drugs (EAD)’ initiative and the future structure of the Civil Society Forum. The methodology of the report on the world’s illicit drugs markets was also presented to the forum.

After a presentation by the European Commission (EC) on the EU’s action plan for drugs that was adopted by the Council of Ministers in December 2008, a lively debate ensued on a range of issues such as how drug users could be involved in the process of implementation of the Action Plan, the development of assessment tools, how to ensure high standards of quality, indicators on drugs markets and drugs-related crime and equal access to treatment and prevention programmes for different social groups. The EC also presented an update on the status of negotiations on UNGASS and how the EU Member States were working together to come up with a common position.

The EC then gave a presentation on the ‘European Action on Drugs’ initiative, which is modeled on the ‘road safety charter’. The idea is to encourage associations, NGOs, national and local authorities, institutions, companies and individuals to make a commitment relating to drugs and to raise awareness about drugs issues. The launch date is 26 June 2009.

A small volunteer group on the ‘European Action on Drugs’ initiative was set up and discussed the initiative in greater detail on the second day of the conference. They suggested not using the term ‘Alliance’. (The name that was finally adopted by the Commission was "The European Action on Drugs". The EC has decided to change the name from "European Alliance on Drugs" to "Action" after consultation from the Civil Society Forum. For more information click on the following link: www.action-drugs.eu) Other suggestions included using words such as ‘engagement’, ‘citizenship’, ‘shared responsibility’, ‘platform’, ‘coalition’, ‘commitment’, ‘action(s)’. The civil society forum was broadly in favour of the grassroots approach of the initiative. A range of views were expressed, including that the project needed a tighter focus, and that the indicators for it should be improved as a ‘wide commitment to the Action’ is not good for its evaluation. Moreover, drug users should be involved, and that there are risks not just from drug use but also from unintended consequences of drug policies, that it should also focus on drug use related risks and on the responsible use of drugs.

As for the future of the Civil Society Forum, there was a fair amount of support for two meetings per year with a link made between the forum and the EU’s Action Plan on Drugs. Within four years, there could then be the option of a major conference of a few hundred people where some members would be reimbursed for their travel and
accommodation and those who could attend anyway would not be reimbursed. The EC will work on the feasibility of such a package.

Chair Ton Coenen suggested the following framework for future agendas:
- Focus on the EU’s Action Plan on Drugs
- National presentations by the forum
- International developments (e.g. UNGASS review)
- Urgent issues needing debate

A suggestion was made that Ton Coenen should also chair the next meeting and that volunteers from the forum could then help him with the planning and process of the next meeting. Volunteers were then decided on.

Other key points:
- The overall aim/mission has quite some support as it is – the forum is an informal structure but communication should not be informal.
- There is a desire to add principles and objectives to the aims of the mission and these would need to be worked on.
- There should be a discussion on the form of the report of the meeting.

During the meeting, Franz Trautmann, Head of International Unit, Trimbos Institute, gave a presentation on the methodology of the Report on Global Illicit Drugs Markets, 1998-2007, an independent study of how drugs flow, from production to the final consumer, who benefits, and how the trade is organized, etc.
OPENING AND INTRODUCTION

Carel Edwards (Anti-Drugs Policy Unit, DG Justice Freedom and Security (DG JLS) European Commission)

Outlined two of the main issues of the meeting: the new EU action plan on drugs, for which civil society’s input was very useful, and the European Action on Drugs, an initiative taken by the EU’s Justice, Freedom and Security Commissioner Jacques Barrot. Barrot believes that this is an issue that governments cannot solve in a top-down way and that they need to involve stakeholders in society.

Ton Coenen, Executive Director of Foundation Aids Fonds

Ton Coenen hoped for an interactive debate and ensured that all the different voices were heard. He made a plea for presentations to be kept as short as possible to leave room for discussion and asked all the participants to state their names and which organisations they were representing.

Maurice Galla (Anti-Drugs Policy Unit, DG JLS, European Commission)

Maurice Galla gave a presentation on developments in the area of drugs in 2008 in EU and UN drug policy.
THE NEW EU ACTION PLAN ON DRUGS

Drug demand reduction and drug supply reduction remain the two main pillars of EU drug policy, also in this action plan. Some actions may be of specific interests for the members of the forum. For example, on drug demand reduction, an EU consensus document is to be drafted by 2012, with the aim being to find a minimum consensus on what is good quality/ the need for setting benchmarks in drug prevention, treatment, harm reduction and reintegration/ rehabilitation. This is a big task, with discussions due to begin early next year. The Action Plan also pays specific attention to measures that need to be taken in prison (e.g. monitoring the health situation in prisons).

On drug supply reduction, the Action Plan calls for the strengthening of cooperation (e.g. with Europol and Eurojust) and to focus on intelligence-led law enforcement (i.e. doing more of the things that it makes sense to do). The Action Plan also supports the development of multilateral cooperation platforms in response to emerging trafficking routes, for example in West Africa.

In terms of international cooperation, drug demand reduction and harm reduction are high on the agenda as potential priorities towards cooperation with non-EU countries and there is an aim to reach more unified positions vis à vis international organisations such as the UN.

In terms of information/research and evaluation, the key points are:

- The Commission will organize a conference on coordination/cooperation in drug-related research in September 2009
- Continued support for European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) and the Reitox network – important for the delivery of data for EU policy.
- Further development of indicators in drug demand reduction and drug supply reduction (e.g. more about how the drugs market works and drug-related crime in Member States).
- More investment in the development of tools for the evaluation of drug policies.
- By 2012, an independent evaluation of the implementation of the 2005-2012 strategy and the 2009-2012 Action Plan (civil society will be one of the stakeholder groups to be addressed in the evaluation methodology).

Other points:

- Efforts have been made to formulate better assessment tools and to name those responsible for particular actions – hence the column structure of the action plan.
- The Civil Society Forum on Drugs to be continued.
- A European Action on Drugs initiative to be launched.
- Further support to be given for the involvement of civil society at local and national level. This is primarily a task for Member States, but civil society organizations can refer to the Action Plan to place it on the national agenda.

In terms of drug policy at the EU level, it must always be understood that:
What is legally possible is not necessarily politically feasible or acceptable.
There are limited tools to enforce the implementation of the action plan but convergence is taking place among Member States.
High quality information is not easy to obtain.
EU drug policy often consolidates policies that have already been implemented in many Member States and then these policies are spread to other Member States.

UNGASS REVIEW

Negotiations are ongoing in Vienna on the review of 1998 UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) documents. In 1998, the UN made a political declaration in which it aimed to reduce the drug problem by 2008 but there has not been a significant improvement in the situation. A draft political declaration and an annex to the political declaration are still being negotiated. The EU is active in the process and adopted a common position in October 2008 with key principles, the most controversial being related to harm reduction and non-conditionality of alternative development. The EU aims to improve policies and has more unity than before but, the longer the process goes on, the harder that is to maintain.

Questions and answers on the EU drugs action plan

Q: The EU action plan is not promoting associations of drug users and not reflecting what users want and need. Why not?
EC: The EC knows that some Member States (MS) could not live with the action plan mentioning users’ associations – that is the political reality we must work with.

Q: The participant did not see an effort being made to make the best use of available evidence. If we look at cannabis use among young people and adults, it is lower in MS where cannabis is semi-legally available. Cannabis prohibition is not lowering demand in other countries. There is also a concern that demand supply reduction is sabotaging harm reduction. None of this is taken on by the action plan.
EC: There is discussion on which policy models are best or worst. There are more MS with policies that are in practice not so different from the countries like the Netherlands (apart from the use of coffee shops), with the use of cannabis being practically decriminalized in many countries and the availability of cannabis being high. Member States pursue those policies that fit their national culture, values and political situation best. This diversity in policies is an important characteristic of EU drug policy.

Q: A JLS working group led by Luxembourg and Brussels is bringing together crime statistics but this is not dealing with drugs or drug use but about delinquents. Is there a proposal to develop statistics in this field?
EC: DG JLS is trying to use existing expertise and develop, in the next four years, some key indicators on drugs markets, drug-related crime and supply reduction.

Q: How far is the action plan gender-specific?
EC: To the extent possible, some actions on this issue were dropped or changed in discussions with the Council.

Q: Why does the EC not appoint a press attaché in the unit to help increase awareness by generating interest in the mass media? How can the issue of equal access to treatment and prevention programmes for different social groups (e.g. the Roma community in Bulgaria or Romania) be dealt with?
EC: This can be discussed in the context of the European Action on Drugs. But it is difficult, because there are 27 different cultures to take into account. The action plan is not for citizens in the street but are intended as guidelines for policy-makers. The Action Plan does have a point on equal access to treatment and respect for fundamental rights.

Q: (combined from a number of participant contributions): On quality standards, we cannot know if services are improving unless we ask the users. Drug users must be asked but this is often a ‘tick box’ exercise. Users should be involved in designing and assessing programmes and be fully integrated in the design of programmes. How will drugs users be included in the future?
EC: The involvement of user groups in assessing quality standards is a problem in the general healthcare field too. In Actions 17, 18 and 19 of the action plan, we asked MS to implement and assess quality guidelines as many Member States do not have them in place. The EC (with the support of EMCDDA) can suggest to include users of services as part of the quality evaluation process, but it is up to MS to carry out surveys seriously or just answer by ticking boxes.

Q: In terms of follow-up of the action plan, how pro-active is the EC? Do you phone up the MS?
EC: The EC cannot tell MS what to do nor can it implement the Action Plan itself but can provide fundings through programmes, put things on the agenda and create links with the EMCDDA and Europol.

Q: Would it be good for people in the forum to give input on research priorities? How could this be done better? In 2006, the EC would make a survey of organisations in the drugs field – does it still plan to do that?
EC: The forum’s work is to be discussed later. On research priorities, a study will be ready in a few months, giving an overview of what is happening in MS and at EU level, identifying gaps and problems. There will be a separate conference and we could see how the forum could be involved or if those of you, who are interested can do so. We cannot see any reason why you should not take part.

Q: How can the input of the forum or the EC be meaningful when there is only one forum meeting every year?
EC: This is to be discussed tomorrow. The forum is on the web but it is not something living if there is no real content. It is up to you when you want to give input. A meeting every month is not feasible but perhaps, something in between that and what we have now is possible. A list of civil society organisations is available from different sources but not from the EC. We will look into making it available on the EC website but this is not always easy.

Questions and answers on UNGASS

Q: The EC paid for a review of UNGASS’s results but it is to be made public on 10 March, just one day before the UN summit on UNGASS. This makes it completely useless in the process. Is the EC just trying to keep the status quo or is it really interested in listening and looking at the real figures and deciding based on the best available evidence?
EC: The EC did not pay for a review of UNGASS, the EC did sponsor a number of UN expert meetings to reflect on the UNGASS assessment made by UNODC. The study that is to be launched at March 10th is something different. Some years ago, we became aware of the misperception in society of the global drugs issues. In the mass media it is rare that there is a really good article about drugs reflecting reality. So we said we would do a study analysing the worldwide drugs market as if it were an industry and publish it in 2009. The draft is still not complete. It is a huge undertaking. The idea was to put before policy-makers a detailed study using all the data that the we could lay our hands on but this turned out to be distressingly little. We made some surprising discoveries, including that the drugs market is far more complex and sinister than Hollywood films depict it as being. We will not use it as a review of UNGASS although UNGASS is part of it since the study reflects on the decade in which UNGASS was being implemented. If things go as planned, it is to be presented to the European Parliament by Commissioner Barrot on 10 March, the day before the UNGASS meeting and in Vienna the day after. But again, it is not an EC review of UNGASS.

EC: It is also important to look at the role the EU plays in the UNGASS debate. 180 countries did not really want a reflection and move on with the follow up of UNGASS. The only reason that the debate in Vienna is still ongoing is because of the EU position in the discussions and negotiations. The EU has not been a pushover this time.

Q: What alliances does the EU have in the UN to get its recommendations through? If you cannot use this report (of the study), what evidence-based data do you use in negotiations?
EC: Civil society is an important alliance. So are other regions in the world, such as some countries in South America (e.g. Argentina) and moderate countries. But there are other countries that do not want to see change. There is very good EU data from the EMCDDA and we can show some data here and point out to others that they should do the same.

Q: Why are frictions in the EU not so pronounced?
EC: There are of course at times disagreements between EU MS. In Vienna, EU MS meet for an hour in a separate room to agree a common line. If one MS cannot agree, they make a separate statement if they really feel it concerns an important issue. There is a European model of the balanced approach on drugs, which is about a balance between drug demand reduction (including harm reduction) and drug supply reduction. The EU does not want to be railroaded into a ‘war on drugs’ attitude. There are large parts of the world with no data who effectively cannot monitor problems properly.
EUROPEAN ACTION ON DRUGS (EAD)

Initially called European Alliance on Drugs - The EC has decided to change its name after consultation with the Civil Society Forum

Paula Tardioli-Schiavo (Anti-Drugs Policy Unit, DG Justice Freedom and Security (DGJLS) European Commission)

The European Action on Drugs is a European Commission initiative inspired from the ‘European Road Safety Charter’. Its aim is to encourage people to take concrete action, raise awareness about drug issues and take shared responsibility. The Action's document is a declaration with a number of general paragraphs highlighting the context and objectives plus a ‘blank article’ where everyone can fill in a commitment.

Other key points:

- The European Commission is not acting directly but will provide a tool for everyone to use.
- The text is not binding.
- The European Commission is financing the initiative but not the individual commitments.
- Principles of non-stigmatisation and non-discrimination will apply to those experiencing drug problems.
- Those involved can be associations, NGOs, national and local authorities, institutions, companies and individuals.
- Aims include: to improve social responsibility, to improve dialogue and exchange of best practice at EU level.
- To be launched on 26 June 2009.
- Subsequently is to communicate and promote in MS.

Questions and answers on the European Action on Drugs

Q: What is to be done before 26 June?

EC: We are inviting the civil society forum to provide feedback on the text of the EAD during this meeting.

Q: Are there consultations with other groups such as the commercial sector?

EC: Consultations will take part on all targeted bodies i.e companies, NGOs, public authorities, etc.
Q: Are there ethical considerations? Will the alcohol production industry get involved in this process?

Q: There is no real debate in this forum (with only one meeting per year) and through the EAD this forum should be involved.

Q: The EAD should be the final step in the process starting with dialogue but we have not had the dialogue up until now.

Q: What resources in terms of money and man hours will the European Commission use to implement the EAD?

Q: You talk of delivering the ‘right’ message to young people but there is considerable debate in this room as to what ‘right’ would be. Organisations are included regardless of their interest in drugs.

EC: On ethical considerations, the European Commission is not involving anyone directly but is providing a tool at the disposal of organizations and people that want to use it. We do not see the alcohol industry willing to sign up to it.

Q: What if they do? Is it open to everyone working on drugs issues?

EC: Yes, it is an open exercise. It could be a useful tool for schools associations or discos for example. Everyone can join the Action with a concrete commitment as a first step. There is no conceptual link between the forum and the Action. We do not think that the Action approach is very bureaucratic. We are trying to make the drugs issue more relevant as a matter of discussion in Europe. As for the point about the ‘right’ message, this is the substance of the issue and is something we need to discuss during the workshops.

Q: Are there resources available? Will you connect groups first, before starting the EAD? Are there successful examples of how the EAD could work?

EC: There are not many resources available. We are replicating the successful ‘European road safety charter’, with more than 1000 signatories. The EAD can become your ‘platform’ for communication and exchange of experience and best practice, as well as a dynamic network of different people and organisations working to achieve the same results.

Q: Are we dealing with semi-legal or illegal drugs?

EC: We refer to illegal drugs and the strength of this initiative is that it is open and involves different cultures, laws and values.

Q: What do we want to achieve with it, in terms of its end result?
EC: For road safety, the aim was to save 25,000 lives in a year. For drugs, it is to mobilize society, raise awareness and encourage concrete action. The end result is a significant number of commitments taken and implemented in the Member States.

The European Commission's communication is not to society but to stakeholders.

Q: For road safety, there was no ideology or political debate. That is not the case for drugs. I am concerned that the drinks industry or scientology might take part.

Q: What is the added value of the EAD?

EC: The added value for organisations is European visibility and exchange of best practice at EU level.

Q: What is the management structure for it? What will the key outcomes be, what is the timescale and how will it be measured?

EC: The management structure is being developed through a Communications consultant. The website is the main tool for the exchange of information. There will be events (e.g. a conference) where signatories can present their commitments and network.

Q: Are people who can sign up filtered?

EC: As for filtering, the tendency is to get as many people involved as possible. The general target is the number of commitments implemented on the ground.

The European Commission concluded by saying that the last two Eurobarometers in recent years have shown that drugs are an issue as they have been the first or second concern. The European Commission pointed out that the logic of the EAD is that, if it is so important and affects many people’s normal lives, the European Commission will put something in civil society’s hands to do something about it. As for filtering, as per the European Commission’s normal screening process, the European Commission will exclude any organisation with criminal or extremist affiliations.

Results of the debate on the European Action on Drugs

The plenary split into two workshops, A and B, to discuss the merits of the European Action on Drugs. Following discussion, a moderator for each workshop reported back to the plenary with the main conclusions of their group.

Group A: Paula Tardioli-Schiavo (Anti-Drugs Policy Unit, DG Justice, Freedom and Security European Commission)

- There was a lively debate
There was a general understanding that the initiative is more about campaigning than building an organization.
The proposal needs more specifics on aims and criteria applied to be really effective but more precision means touching on what can and cannot be included plus the issue of what language to use.
Some support plus criticism on the added value of the initiative as such.

Group B: Melanie Potamitou (Anti-Drugs Policy Unit, DG Justice, Freedom and Security European Commission)

- Had Q&A session for first hour as many participants had trouble understanding the initiative, possibly because of the term ‘Alliance’, as this means something different to professionals in the drugs field to what is addressed in this initiative.
- A main recommendation is to change the name of the initiative to a campaign and provide different indicators and aims.
- There was quite a lot of support for the principle of evidence and efficiency, anti-discrimination, taking a holistic approach, not being judgmental, addressing vulnerable groups (including the involvement of drug users).
- The fact that drugs are not always problematic needs to be considered in the framework of the activities.
- There is a need to clarify the terminology – as sometimes there is a reference to ‘drug abuse’ and sometimes to ‘drug use’.
- Is a ‘healthy lifestyle’ really what we want to achieve or do we want to talk more about a ‘good quality of life’?
- It should be a campaign and not an Alliance or a political body.
- There should be a mid-term evaluation of the process.
- A disclaimer should be included (i.e. that by signing a commitment, this does mean that the signatory supports other commitments).
- Should the language only be in English as this keeps out 80% of organisations?
- A group of interested people in the forum should be created to further develop the campaign.
- The EC’s role is the guiding body and it is responsible for the initiative.

Action points summarised by Ton Coenen:

- Agreement to address the initiative as a campaign and not an Alliance.
- A group from civil society will be further involved in how the campaign will be shaped and the language that will be used – a blank sheet of paper was put by the entrance of the room for volunteers to put their names down.
- The questionnaire that the EC has sent out needs to be returned to the EC within 10 days at the latest and earlier if possible.
Initial debate on the future of the civil society forum

Summary of debate on the future of the civil society forum by Ton Coenen

Civil society’s ownership of the forum can be improved by:
- Setting the agenda
- Someone from the forum chairing the forum’s meetings
- Groups being active in the coordination of what happens in the forum
- To have meaningful discussions, it should be clear what is being done with the outcome of the meetings.
- The possibility of a control mechanism should be considered.
- There is a question as to whether a meeting between civil society and the EC once a year is enough interaction.
- Should the forum stay in its present form or be linked to a larger forum?
- Strong agreement for use of EC expertise and civil society forum expertise (the latter is not currently fully used)
- There is a wish for not too much bureaucracy in the proceedings.
- Resources is a key point – for the civil society forum to be effective, it needs some resources – is there money available for organisational support?

EC:
- Tomorrow we can give precise figures for this year’s budget.
- There is possibly some money from the Drug Prevention and Information programme but we cannot make any commitments.
- In terms of bureaucracy, this is a small unit and we do not have one person working full time on the forum.
- In terms of replying to your messages, officially we have 15 days to reply but our response time is more or less five days
- On the agenda and chairing, we are open to ideas on that – originally we wanted an independent moderator.
- As to how the outcome is used, the EC is an independent body that consults with external actors but it is an independent actor and we cannot change that.
- On the frequency of meetings, the EC representative agreed that there should be two annual meetings as he sees the frustration at meeting just once a year.
- On communication between the EC and the forum, there is a lot that can be done and it is up to you to see how the forum works together.
- Cooperation between DG JLS and DG SANCO (Health and consumer protection) takes place on a daily basis.

Ton Coenen:
The civil society forum must be organised and create a structure. That is crucial to move things forward. It is important to see how the forum can lead the process and determine what is on the agenda.
FUTURE OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM

Timo Jetsu (Anti-Drugs Policy Unit, DG Justice Freedom and Security (DG JLS) European Commission)

Timo Jetsu went over the history of the forum. Among his points, he noted that:

- The selection criteria work procedures for membership of the forum should be totally transparent.
- The resources issue is and remains a very difficult issue – there is no one person in the unit working on the forum full time.
- The information flow between the forum and networks should be ensured.
- The forum is currently about illegal drugs as it does not talk about tobacco and alcohol at the moment.
- The forum is more about participatory democracy than representative democracy.
- Open questions – priority for transnational networks or not / political and ideological debates or not.

The current mission statement is still valid for Timo Jetsu but could be a point for discussion. He also went over the forum membership criteria:

- Organisation must have its main base of operation in an EU MS
- Priority is given to organisations in the form of transnational networks
- Organisation must have drug-related activities as a core focus of its activities (some have been excluded on this basis)
- Credibility – there needs to be a clear track record of the organisation’s activity
- Representativeness
- Organisation must be legal and financially accountable
- Membership is for two years, which can be renewed
- Maximum size of the forum is 30 but this is open to discussion
- If an organisation is not selected, detailed information on why is provided to the organisation at the latest within 15 days of a request for that information

Other points:
If forum participants want to put something on the agenda, they can contact the EC.
The mandate of the existing forum runs until 2009 but there is no timetable yet for a new round of applications.

Melanie Potamitou (Anti-Drugs Policy Unit, DG Justice Freedom and Security (DGJLS) European Commission)

The total budget spent for this conference was 70,000 euro. There is 100,000 euro available per year from the Drug Prevention Programme, which means two conferences per year is possible. If there were 40 members attending each conference, then there might be enough to pay for their travel and accommodation but even that is questionable.
If there were 250 members, this would rule out the possibility of funding travel and accommodation for participants.

After a number of interventions, Chair Ton Coenen summed up the debate:

- The overall aim/mission has quite some support as it is – the forum is an informal structure but communication should not be informal.
- There is a desire to add principles and objectives to the aims of the mission and these would need to be worked on.
- There should be a discussion on the form of the report of the meeting.
- The focus is on illegal not legal drugs but this is not stated.

He added that it would be useful if a group of five or six people from the forum would be willing to work on the details of the working issues that need to be taken on.

On the structure of the forum, he said that, given the amount of funding available, there is a choice between having a big meeting where people would have to pay for their travel and accommodation or two meetings per year of 30-40 people where members are fully reimbursed (observers pay for themselves).

After further debate, Chair Ton Coenen again summed up the state of play in the debate:

There is quite some support for two meetings per year with a link made between the forum and the EU’s Action Plan on Drugs. Within four years, there could then be the option of a major conference of a few hundred people where some members would be reimbursed for their travel and accommodation and those who could attend anyway would not be reimbursed. The EC could work on the feasibility of such a package.

Further debate focused on the selection criteria and process for membership, rough issues on the agenda for meetings and agenda-setting/chairmanship of the meetings.

On the selection criteria, the EC noted that it was not possible to publish lists saying explicitly why a particular organisation had been excluded from the forum but that it could give reasons to any excluded organisation that asked for them. Chair Ton Coenen summed up the debate by saying that there were different views in the forum on the selection process and that there was a big majority for the forum giving ‘democratic advice’ to the EC. In terms of setting the agenda, he said that it would be useful to have a small group reflecting the different perspectives of the forum.

Chair Ton Coenen suggested the following framework for future agendas:

- Focus on the EU’s Action Plan on Drugs
- National presentations by the forum
- International developments (e.g. UNGASS review)
- Urgent issues needing debate
A suggestion was made that Chair Ton Coenen should also chair the next meeting and that volunteers from the forum could then help him with the planning and process of the next meeting.

The EC concluded that, because there was no consensus on selection of members, the role of the EC was needed. There is no more money for forum meetings in 2009 but the EC will see what can be done in early 2010. The EC suggested to make the agenda for every conference but with a number of contact people reflecting the different disciplines and views in the forum. EC felt that it was the forum that should be setting the agenda in future. Feeding in comments regarding the EU’s Action Plan on Drugs can be usefully done while it is going on as MS understand it as a living document in which amendments can be made.

Chair Ton Coenen said that the EC proposal includes people from the forum in the agenda-setting. He called for volunteers who wanted to be in that group of people. Initially, there were too many volunteers but in the end six decided to put themselves forward – Anders Ulstein, Rominta Stuikyte, Virginia Montañes Sanchez, Eberhard Schatz, Elliot Albert and Amador Calafat. He concluded that the EU’s Action Plan on Drugs would be the key focus, that presentations from people in the forum would also be on the agenda and that the EC would take the lead in preparing the next agenda.
REPORT ON GLOBAL ILLICIT DRUGS MARKETS, 1998-2007
(Franz Trautmann, Head of International unit, Trimbos Institute)

The report is an extensive one (400-500 pages) covering cocaine, heroine, marijuana and amphetamine type stimulants (ATS). Among the many points:

Opium (Afghanistan, Myanmar, Colombia) and cocaine (mainly Colombia) production takes place in rather poor countries while ATS and cannabis takes place in rich and poor countries (170 of them).

In terms of profits, more profit was made at the end of the chain (by street dealers) than at the farm gate (2% of the retail price).

In the last ten years, there was no data showing that the situation was getting better. Afghanistan is now almost the sole opium producer (Myanmar not producing a lot). Colombia is now the dominant cocaine producer (a shift from Bolivia and Peru). ATS production is spreading to an ever growing number of countries all over the world. Cannabis (also known as marijuana) production is spread over more than 170 countries.

Answering a range of questions about the report, he made various points:

- Five people were involved from Trimbos, five from Rand and some occasional experts.
- There were no hard estimates in terms of the economic aspects of global illicit drugs markets.
- No recommendations were made in the report as the data is too complex to do that – there are conclusions and, based on them, policy-makers can make policy.
- The speaker did not think that you could say that the drug problem has been contained.
- Cognitive therapy works well and it is unfortunate that not all countries are investing in it.
- There has been a reduction in drug-related harm after harm reduction programmes were introduced over many years in, for example, the Czech Republic, the UK and the Netherlands.
- A ‘drug-free society’ is not realistic as we do not have the tools for that.
- Gender-specific issues were not covered as sometimes the data was available and sometimes not.
- We know that some forms of drug treatment and prevention are effective – e.g. school-based prevention – here, the best that you can get is delay of onset [before children start taking drugs] of two to three years.

The EC noted that the idea of the report was to give to European and international policy-makers completely dispassionate and objective information produced by people with no political or ideological axe to grind. There is not enough data and something should be done about this. The report was formally presented in Vienna on 11 March.
DEBATE IN A SMALL VOLUNTEER GROUP ON THE EUROPEAN ACTION ON DRUGS CAMPAIGN

The core issues discussed were the name of this European Commission initiative, its aims and structure.

**Name:**
Suggestions included European Engagement on Drugs and using words such as ‘citizenship’, ‘shared responsibility’, ‘platform’, ‘coalition’, ‘commitment’, ‘action(s)’

**Other key points made by different members:**
- The grassroots approach is very useful.
- It is important to homogenise terms, e.g. by choosing between ‘drug abuse’ and ‘drug use’ and using one systematically – speaker would choose ‘drug abuse’.
- The indicators for it should be improved as a ‘wide commitment to the EAD’ is not good for its evaluation.
- EC said that, regarding filtering, there are people or actions that would not be wanted and that some will use it to pursue personal agendas – the EC does not have a filtering process yet and that will be dealt with on another day.
- It is not enough just to put things on a website as there needs to be action in terms of going to talk to groups, schools etc.
- In terms of structure, the EC said that the aim was to make the launch as public as possible (possibly with some high profile individuals), to get it on TV if possible and to follow it up and then do it again six months later, asking what had happened to x or y person who had made a commitment in the context of the EAD, i.e. what they are doing now.
- It sounds like a public education campaign, which tend to be unsuccessful.
- There is a high level of risk as to whether it will be successful or not.
- The power of the EU can be used to get an issue such as harm reduction into the public eye so that people can see that it is an acceptable thing to do.
- One member was very much in favour if drug users could be involved in the campaign.
- The problem of the stigmatisation of drug users was addressed.
- A suggestion was made to always repeat ‘the risk of taking drugs’ to replace any parts of the text of the EAD charter where ‘drug use’ or ‘drug abuse’ is mentioned.
- The project needs a tighter focus – dealing perhaps with people with problems taking advantage of services (e.g. directories of services could be promoted), young people and the notion of stigmatisation.
- There are risks not just from drug use but also from drug policies.
- If the EAD focuses on problems related to drug use and considers all drug use as a problem, people will receive the message that drug users are all problematic but not all drug users are problematic. One speaker said that 71 million people have used cannabis at some time in their lives but that they did not believe that all these people are problematic and have a health problem because they used cannabis.
• One speaker said that they were not arguing that the EAD should not address prevention but that it should not only focus on that and the drugs problem. It should also focus on drug use related risks and on the responsible use of drugs for people choosing to take drugs without harming anyone.
• Drug use should not be stigmatised but you cannot say that it is ‘normal’
• Drugs are about quality of life as society has always used some mind and mood alterants – these are normal and natural human behaviours but there needs to be the environment to do it safely.
• In number one of the text of the declaration, use of the word “everyone” is too strong.
• Also in number one, it is better to use the term “drug use” than “drug abuse”.

The EC concluded by saying that it would email the text tonight and that it would need replies within ten days. People interested in signing up to the EAD were encouraged to do so as soon as possible.